

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: November 16, 2006

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GOV. EASLEY ACTIVATES STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM *Urges Caution As Severe Storms Move Through The State*

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today activated the State Emergency Response Team and dispatched emergency crews to assist affected counties as severe storms move across the state. The governor urged citizens to pay close attention to weather reports for the rest of the day and take immediate action if a tornado warning is issued for their area. Fatalities and damage have already been reported in North Carolina.

“This storm system has the potential to cause more tornados during the day and isolated flooding in our state,” Easley said. “I urge everyone to stay tuned to local weather forecasts, heed the advice of local emergency officials and have a plan of action in case a tornado develops to keep their family safe.”

Several people were reported dead and dozens of homes were destroyed early this morning when what appears to have been a tornado touched down near Old Lake Road off NC 87 in the town of Riegelwood in Columbus County in southeastern North Carolina. A shelter has been opened at the Acme Delco Elementary School in Riegelwood.

State emergency management coordinators are already in several counties including Columbus, Rowan, Iredell and Lincoln. The Department of Transportation reports that N.C. 87 is closed in Columbus County from N.C. 11 to U.S. 74 due to downed trees and power lines. Traffic is being detoured along N.C. 11 to U.S. 74.

Other reports of damage include several counties in the western part of the state. Scattered power outages are also reported. A possible tornado touched down in east Lincoln County late last night with trees down on houses and across roadways from South Little Egypt to Webb Road. In Iredell County near Statesville, local emergency management officials reported three mobile homes in the area of Fraley Road and Riverhill Road off I-40 have been destroyed, and other mobile homes in the area have been damaged. Five people were transported to hospitals with injuries. Reports of power lines hanging low over US 70 in Rowan County at the Iredell County line caused eastbound and westbound lanes of the highway to be closed for an undetermined amount of time.

The system that is traveling through North Carolina today has already been responsible for damage and fatalities in other parts of the southeastern U.S. Tornados were reported yesterday in Alabama and